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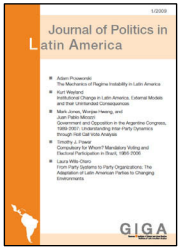

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Analytical Essay

Realism under Hegemony: Theorizing the Rise of Brazil

Kurt Weyland

Abstract: What light can international relations theory shed on how developing countries such as Brazil have achieved regional leadership and international influence? This comprehensive examination of Brazilian foreign policy over the last few decades argues that Realism provides a better account of Brazil's strategy than Liberalism and Constructivism. Despite changes of government and regime, Brasília has persistently pursued relative political gain, especially international influence. However, because this rising country has faced an established hegemon in the form of the United States, it has not been able to employ conventionally Realist instruments and tactics. Its subordinate position in the current power constellation has forced Brazil to forego political or military confrontation and instead use economic cooperation, both with the hegemon and its weaker neighbors. Through this collaboration, Brazil hopes to derive disproportionate benefits that will enhance its relative power. By elucidating these complex calculations, the present essay explains the Realist strategy that ambitious nations such as Brazil have pursued and helps design a version of Realism that captures recent power dynamics in the international system.

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Introduction

The study of international relations (IR) among developing countries has long suffered from a deficit in theory. The main IR paradigms have concentrated on First-World nations, especially great powers. These influential players command the greatest capacity and latitude for action, particularly in the security arena, which has traditionally attracted the most attention. After all, war and peace are crucial for states' integrity and sheer survival, and great powers have determined the outcomes of most wars, shaping weaker countries' fate as well. As far back as 2500 years ago, Thucydides, Realism's classical forerunner, focused on Athens and Sparta, not Melos, the target of Athenian wrath.

Like Melos in antiquity, developing countries have largely been viewed as the pawns of great power rivalry or victims of First-World oppression and exploitation (Buzan 1998: 214–217). The only IR approach conceived in the global South reinforced this tendency of questioning developing countries' capacity for agency. Dependency theory depicted the former colonies as objects of Northern pressures – dominated and constrained, they looked helpless. Even the few nations that did achieve some development remained dependent and unable to advance to any great extent (Evans 1979).

However, dependency theory was criticized heavily because this bleak picture did not conform to the developmental achievements of increasing numbers of Asian and Latin American countries. The success of East Asia's "tigers" and the rise of regional great powers like Brazil and India, not to mention China, have been especially striking. Developing countries have done much better than expected by the theorists of dependency and even by "dependent development" (early acknowledgment in Evans 1986). Nations in the global South do have considerable agency; their states can engage in active "dependency management" (Gereffi 1994) and advance in the global system, despite First-World predominance. Brazil, for instance, created a sophisticated computer industry (Evans 1986) and started to export airplanes to the United States.

Emerging countries' success not only casts doubt on dependency theory, but also calls for a broader re-thinking. Which theory can best account for these nations' advances, and how can this approach be extended beyond the global Northwest to capture the special conditions facing developing countries and elucidate their strategies and tactics for moving up in the world? Because established frameworks focus on great powers (Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2001), their standard versions do not directly illuminate the most striking change in the contemporary world;

that is, the emergence of new leaders in several regions. This transformation of power constellations is under way, even in Latin America, where the only current superpower commands predominance (Lake 2009; Ikenberry 2011: 22–27, 55–61, 191–194, 207–216, 296–299; Donnelly 2006; Hurrell 2007: chap. 11). In this region, Brazil has ever more firmly claimed regional leadership (Schirm 2005; Burges 2009) and assumed an increasingly influential global role. Both goals are exemplified by Brazil's quest for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, which would turn the lusophone giant into the institutional spokesperson for South America.

How can the emergence of new powers be theorized? What goals drive the efforts of ambitious nations to rise, and how do they pursue these goals? The present essay examines Brazil's rise with a dual purpose. First, by drawing on the burgeoning scholarship on Brazil's international relations (Amorim 2014; Burges 2008, 2009; Cason and Power 2009; Daudelin and Burges 2011; Hirst 2005; Hurrell 2007; Malamud 2011; Saraiva 2010, 2014; Schirm 2005; Schneider 1976; Selcher 1978; Smith 2010; Soares de Lima 2010; Teixeira 2011; Trinkunas 2014; Vigevani and Cepaluni 2009; Zirker 1994), it offers a comprehensive theoretical interpretation of the foreign policy trajectory of an important emerging power.

Second, the Brazilian case suggests broader insights about the necessary adaptation of extant theoretical paradigms. As the essay argues, Brazil has followed a Realist approach, pursuing primarily relative political gains, namely national power and international influence (Schirm 2005). However, American hegemony has imposed crucial constraints on this rising power. Given its disadvantageous current position in the international power constellation, Brazil has systematically applied instruments and tactics that are different to those of earlier aspirants to international leadership (cf. Gilpin 1981). The global distribution of power, Realism's master variable, has forced Brazil to pursue its typically Realist goals in different ways than established great powers did during their rise. Realism itself accounts for this difference by highlighting the subordinate starting place of emerging powers. By deriving insights from Brazil's ascendance, the essay helps to broaden Realism beyond its focus on traditional great powers.

This Realist interpretation, which emphasizes the drive for relative political gains, is more persuasive than Liberal and Constructivist arguments that focus on the quest for absolute economic gains or commitment to globally recognized norms. Brazil's determination to augment its national power certainly requires economic cooperation to boost its development and thereby strengthen its resource base for projecting

international influence. However, in contrast to Liberalism, this economic collaboration plays second fiddle to fundamental political goals, serving as mere instruments. The primacy of politics became clear in Brazil's unwillingness to form a Free-Trade Area of the Americas. This pet project of economic Liberalism promised substantial economic gains through increased trade and deepening specialization. For Brasília, however, Liberal integration threatened to cement American superiority and freeze the lusophone colossus into a subordinate political position. To reinforce its chances of rising in the international pecking order and eventually rivaling the US, Brazil forewent absolute economic gain. The hope for relative political advancement won out, as Realism predicts.

Constructivism would highlight that Brazil is committed to international norms such as peaceful conflict resolution and therefore forgoes the tactic traditionally associated with Realism, such as aggressive pressure and military campaigns. However, this adherence to international principles is notoriously selective. For instance, Brasília defends democracy in Paraguay, but not in Peru and Venezuela; these inconsistencies seem to arise from power–political calculations (Burges and Daudelin 2007: 115–129). Opportunistic self-interest overrides value commitments. Moreover, the global distribution of power – not an international norm – best explains why Brazil avoids military pressures: US predominance in the Americas precludes offensive actions, which would undermine Brazil's chances of future advancement. Brazil's international behavior is not governed by inherent value commitments, but by interest calculations designed to foster Brazil's own great power ambitions.

Thus, Realism's master variable, the international power constellation, provides a better explanation for Brazil's foreign policy strategy than Liberalism or Constructivism (careful statistical corroboration in Amorim 2014: 160–164, 169–171, 176). Above all, Brazil's tactical differences compared to earlier great powers can be accounted for by the country's disadvantageous starting position in the quest for international influence . What look like elements of Liberalism and Constructivism are mere instruments for Brazil's Realist strategy.

Moreover, Realism more persuasively explains the amazing continuity in Brazil's strategy. Great power ambitions have guided its foreign policy for more than a century, regardless of government ideology or political regime. Contrary to Liberalism and Constructivism, alternations between authoritarianism and democracy, right-wing and left-wing administrations have made little difference; for instance, the moderate-left, democratic Lula da Silva government (2003–2010) claimed Brazilian leadership in similar terms to the anti-Communist dictatorship of Gen-

eral Emílio Médici (1969–1974). This surprising congruence among political opposites is rooted in a "national interest" that is persistently promoted by a core of state officials in Brazil's Foreign Ministry. In order to demonstrate this fundamental continuity – a Realist prediction that the changing interest group pressures of Liberalism and the normative advances of Constructivism have difficulty explaining – this essay provides a long-term perspective on Brazilian foreign policy.

Realism for Late-Emerging Powers

A Realist Core: Consensual Pursuit of a "National Interest" in Power Accumulation

While the Liberal consensus (Ikenberry 2011) and ambitious institution-building among First-World countries have led some scholars to question the applicability of Realism to advanced industrialized nations in the 21st century, this approach, with its focus on self-interest, security, and power, offers the best starting point for analyzing the international relations of contemporary developing countries (Goldgeier and McFaul 1992: 469, 477–480, 486–488). Because these nations feel hemmed in by the political-military influence and economic clout of the global Northwest, they prioritize enhancing their autonomy, augmenting their power, and thus achieving relative gains. As anti-status-quo players seeking to catch up, these countries try hard to preserve their security, bolster their national integrity, and rise in the regional or global hierarchy. Consequently, they firmly embrace the fundamental goals that drove centuries of Realist struggle among European countries, namely national sovereignty, independence, and non-intervention. At a time when advanced industrialized countries are moving beyond these principles, through means such as slowly constructing a supranational European polity, developing countries have – strikingly, yet logically – insisted on those principles to defend themselves against First-World pressures and boost their own international influence. The core goals that Realism has highlighted – national security, territorial and political integrity, and international power – have driven foreign policy in the global South.

While weaker nations concentrate on defensive goals, developing countries that command significant and growing economic and demographic clout yearn to win increasing international influence and rise on the global ladder. They are more ambitious than countries that have already "arrived" (Gilpin 1981: 162–167; see Layne 2012: 223, 232–236); as in Thomas Mann's novel, newcomers try harder to advance than the

established *Buddenbrooks*. Interestingly, in this effort to move up in the global hierarchy, emerging powers have been inspired by earlier success cases (Ayoob 1995: 27, 32). In this vein, Brazil has long seen the United States as the example to follow.

To these international aspirants, the overarching goal is obvious. This consensual goal constitutes a "national interest" in power accumulation as postulated by Realism, widely shared by domestic sectors (Krasner 1978: ch. 2). The pursuit of international influence is a national preoccupation that does not depend on specific governments, parties, or even the political regime. Right- and left-wing democrats and authoritarians embrace this permanent national interest. In fact, as Realism predicts, the foreign policy-makers of rising nations often derive their aspirations from objective factors, especially the geographically and demographically given power constellation in a region. A look at the map confirms that Brazil is destined to become the leader of South America (Schneider 1976: 32–43), and India the leader of South Asia – at least in the eyes of Brazilians and Indians.

Domestic decision-making structures undergird this undisputed, persistent pursuit of a "national interest" in increasing relative influence. In developing countries, foreign policy is often controlled by a narrow state elite. As societal groupings and party politicians concentrate on domestic development and see international affairs as a low priority, state elites can monopolize foreign policy-making. Moreover, long stretches of authoritarian rule have entrenched insulated bureaucracies, especially in agencies dealing with fundamental state interests such as fiscal extraction and external relations. Democratization tends to affect foreign policy late, if ever. Basically, the limited involvement of society in foreign policy allows the "national interest" in international power accumulation to prevail. The process of interest definition conforms to Realist postulates and differs starkly from the aggregation of societal interests hypothesized by Liberalism.

Due to this Realist orientation, the international norms that are pushed primarily by developed countries, such as environmental protection and the preservation of indigenous peoples, are widely perceived as obstacles to national advancement (Conklin and Graham 1995: 705). The state officials who determine foreign policy, along with many domestic sectors, view these "progressive" principles as hindrances and try to minimize their impact. Instead, they prioritize interests and power, embracing the typically Realist skepticism about international norms. All of these tendencies give the foreign policies of developing countries, especially of emerging powers, a strong Realist core.

This essay therefore argues that Realism provides the cornerstone for explaining international relations in the global South. At the same time, however, this approach must be broadened in order to capture the specific conditions and limitations that emerging powers face – precisely due to the current constellation of international power.

The Context for Emerging Powers: Established Hegemony

To grasp the rise of new powers, Realism must consider the distinct systemic context in which developing countries pursue their foreign policy goals. By highlighting the importance of the international power distribution, Realism is especially well-suited to understand the opportunities and constraints that recent aspirants face. Precisely because today's ambitious nations are latecomers, the conditions necessary for their advance are profoundly different from the parameters that early risers had faced,. Those established great powers, especially the US (Walt 2005: 31–56; Ikenberry 2011), created the international system in line with their own needs and interests. In contrast to these system-makers, developing countries are mostly system-takers; they must try to get ahead in a structure molded by more advanced and more powerful players. They face parameters that are not of their own choosing and must make the best of the opportunities they have. The United States can easily, and sometimes almost inadvertently, reshape the world, as when the 2008 sub-prime crisis affected the global South.

Thus, international latecomers face a constellation shaped by the frontrunners, as Gerschenkron (1965) highlighted for the field of economic development. Ambitious middle powers must deal with established rivals that defend their power and institutional privileges. Newcomers face a different task than the early risers when attempting to catch up; they must apply different means and instruments to pursue their Realist goals. Because Realism primarily reflects the experiences of the frontrunners, it requires extension.

Situational differences are particularly pronounced when a rising aspirant lies in the sphere of influence claimed by a great power, especially the global superpower. The closer this geographic proximity and the starker the power differential, the tighter the constraints facing a middle power. "Poor Mexico, so close to the United States, and so far from God" – as the old saying goes – has had to moderate its aspirations and has eventually abandoned them, associating with the US via NAFTA. Located farther from the US, Brazil enjoys greater latitude (Hakim 2002),

although the hemispheric leader nevertheless imposes significant limitations on Brazilian foreign policy.

Most fundamentally, US predominance tightly restrains the use of military force, the prime instrument for conventional Realism (Gilpin 1981; Mearsheimer 2001). In his quest for hegemony in Europe, Louis XIV – to name a prominent example – regarded war as a normal instrument of statecraft and employed it without hesitation. Nowadays, however, the mega-power that is the United States seeks to prevent other countries from applying military might. US predominance prohibits weapons use inside its sphere of influence, especially war among its allies. The quick suppression of conflicts, such as the Ecuadorian–Peruvian border skirmishes of 1941, 1981, and 1995 and the Greek–Turkish tensions over Cyprus, confirms the hegemon's capacity to enforce order. This fundamental role of a global leader prevents a rising middle power such as Brazil from pursuing its goals via aggression; territorial conquest, which ambitious countries commonly used in earlier times, is out of the question. Defiance of this hegemonic prohibition would expose Brazil to American wrath and set back its quest for international advancement. Thus, Realist interest calculations mandate self-limitation and force emerging powers to deviate from "offensive Realism" (Mearsheimer 2001). Therefore, Brazilian advocacy of peaceful conflict resolution is not an indication of inherent normative commitment, as postulated by Constructivism, but is instead a simple maxim of calculated prudence.

While military power remains the *ultima ratio* of international politics, its very bases have changed as well. Economic development has become even more decisive for sustaining armament capabilities (Mearsheimer 2001: 55–56, 60–75, 143–144). In general, development is essential for rising powers wishing to escape from their subordinate position in the international power constellation. The resulting need for advanced technology and capital constrains rising middle powers. Because the US and its Western allies concentrate these crucial assets, ambitious newcomers must cooperate economically with countries with which they intend to rival politically and, eventually, militarily. Thus, the quest for relative power highlighted by Realism forces the economic collaboration for mutual benefit emphasized by Liberalism.[1] An overarching zero-sum game motivates a positive-sum game entered for in-

1 Ikenberry (2011: ch. 4), who stresses his Liberal leanings, but bases his approach on Realist foundations as well (Ikenberry 2011: xiv, 3, 20, 22, 37, 39–47, 57, 66, 75, 284).

strumental purposes – a necessity that First-World-focused Realists like Mearsheimer (2001) have not sufficiently appreciated.

There is a fundamental means–ends dilemma that constrains rising middle powers: If they want to propel their ascendance, they must foreswear antagonism against established powers and forgo aggression against their weaker neighbors. To prepare for political and, perhaps, military competition in the long run, ambitious nations in the global South must avoid political conflict and military competition in the short run. Instead, they must engage in economic cooperation with their future rivals, hoping that the absolute gain produced by this collaboration will yield relative gains for themselves and thus increase their power slowly but surely. The Liberal lure of mutual benefit is therefore designed to serve the Realist goal of increasing one's own power, which commands primacy and uses economic collaboration merely for instrumental purposes.

Thus, great power predominance inverts Powell's (1991) model, in which the specter of the use of force by potential enemies induces countries that pursue absolute gains to worry about relative gains accruing to those adversaries (similar point in Mearsheimer 2001: 51–52). By contrast, hegemony, which rules out the use of force, confines an ambitious aspirant to the cooperative pursuit of absolute gains, yet based on the hope for disproportionate payoffs and relative gains for itself. This revision suggests that Realism must be adapted to capture the constraints and opportunities facing developing countries. To boost their ascent, emerging nations need to apply different tactics than countries that are not in a subordinate position. As Realism itself highlights, the international power constellation profoundly shapes state behavior. Thus, Realism's master variable informs this extension of the approach to newly rising powers.

Based on the same calculation, rising countries' attempts to establish their own spheres of influence are confined to collaborative ventures and economic means as well. If an ambitious aspirant employed aggressive tactics, it would draw sanctions from the current hegemon and prompt a ring of containment among its neighbors, which would block its ascent. Out of self-interest, the rising nation must forgo forceful pressure and instead lure its neighbors with economic cooperation. This effort rests on the assumption that, due to its greater weight, these collaborative projects will create a web of dependencies that enhance its asymmetrical clout and thus boost its regional leadership. This attempt to establish "cooperative hegemony" (Pedersen 2002) instrumentalizes economic relationships for power–political purposes (for a historical

precedent, see Hirschman 1945: 29–40). Again, mutual benefit and absolute gain are expected to redound in relative gain and growing power, the fundamental goals of a Realist strategy.

Last but not least, current aspirants face a welter of international institutions created at the behest of established great powers. The most relevant of these organizations, such as the IMF and the WTO, which deeply affect economic development, continue to be dominated by these frontrunners. This disadvantageous institutional landscape poses additional dilemmas for emerging powers. Participation is crucial for international advancement, but institutional rules are often skewed to benefit established countries. Ambitious nations need to navigate carefully, take advantage of openings, and advocate reforms designed to obtain higher pay-offs. However, any push for radical change would drive away the current global leaders and condemn the institution to irrelevance (Krasner 1985). Therefore, the existing institutional system – a product of the uneven international power constellation – seriously limits aspirants' room to maneuver.

In conclusion, the prior advancement of frontrunners that have entrenched an international hierarchy has transformed the context in which rising middle powers pursue their ambitions. The veryquest for power, the prototypical Realist goal, now requires an avoidance of typical Realist means, especially military force. Instead, economic cooperation with advanced countries and regional neighbors and pragmatic participation in skewed international institutions have become decisive. These new requirements and constraints operate globally and affect all ambitious developing countries. However, they are strongest in regions where established great powers wield particular influence, such as Latin America (Escudé 1998: 60–70; Donnelly 2006; Lake 2009; Ikenberry 2011).

The Realist Strategy of an Aspiring Great Power: Brazil

These theoretical ideas elucidate the foreign policy of Brazil, which seeks leadership in South America and increasing global influence (see recently Burges 2009). Interestingly, its geostrategic location makes Brazil an "unlikely case" of an emerging power: Lying in the US's direct sphere of influence, Brazil faces serious obstacles to its ambitions. Despite advancing globalization, geography still matters. Accordingly, Mexico has foregone independent leadership and embraced the US via NAFTA. Distance from the global superpower, by contrast, makes it much easier to rise, as China's growing clout and increasing assertiveness have shown.

While less constrained than Mexico, Brazil faces much greater difficulty than China. Its location in the Western hemisphere requires caution. To prevent the hegemon United States from stifling its rise, Brazil must avoid confrontation, foreswear military means, emphasize economic cooperation, and hope that asymmetrical growth rates and differential clout will turn mutual absolute benefit into increasing relative influence. If a country hemmed in by these constraints still seeks to boost its international power and pursues this goal in a persistent, systematic, and comprehensive way, then a Realist interpretation will find special validation (similar Schirm 2005; Amorim 2014: 160–164, 169–171, 176).

Realist Cornerstone: Brazil's National Interest in Power Accumulation

The lodestar of Brazilian foreign policy has long been the quest for national power. In line with Realism, foreign policymakers have read this fundamental aspiration off the map. Because Brazil is by far the largest and most populous nation in South America, the country's leaders have long viewed it as destined for continental leadership and global influence. Brasília perceives the pursuit of international power as grounded in objective reality; the country ought to play the hand it has been dealt by geography and demography (Burges 2009: 36–41). Followed by governments of all stripes – authoritarian and democratic, left- and right-wing (Vigevani and Cepaluni 2009: 11, 82) – this goal constitutes a national interest à la Realism. It does not emerge from interest group pressures or party competition, as Liberalism claims. Instead, it is Brazil's "manifest destiny," equivalent to the notion guiding the 19th-century United States. Promoted by the Brazilian state, this national interest has found widespread societal support (Schirm 2005: 113–114).

Brazil has pursued national power and international leadership in a coherent long-run trajectory. In the early 20th century, the father of Brazilian foreign policy, the Baron of Rio Branco, managed to assert territorial claims and enlarge the country westward. Since then, borders have remained fixed. The fear of provoking a ring of containment by the Spanish-speaking neighbors and the expanding hegemony of the US, which disliked trouble in its sphere of influence and suppressed armed conflict, ruled out territorial conquest. Consequently, Brazil has used other means to tie its smaller, weaker neighbors slowly into asymmetrical linkages and make them dependent, as analyzed below.

Increasing Brazil's national power and international clout has remained the country's fundamental goal to the present day. What the

Baron of Rio Branco initiated (Bueno 2012: 171–173), subsequent governments of all stripes have continued. This persistent goal pursuit is noteworthy. While the military regime (1964–1985) advertised this Realist quest openly with its slogan "Brasil Grande," later democratic administrations have followed the same orientation, for instance by seeking a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Although this longstanding initiative has minimal concrete benefit for a developing country still plagued by grave domestic problems, it represented an attempt to cement Brazil's claim of undisputed regional leadership and enhance its influence by inducing its neighbors to advance their foreign policy initiatives via their "big brother".[2] What the anti-Communist generals had sowed, the leader of the socialist Workers' Party, Lula da Silva (president 2003–2010), tried to harvest by achieving this institutional victory.[3]

Brazil's effort to boost its power qualifies as a national interest in Realist terms. This goal has been widely shared by foreign policymakers from the ideological right and left, in government and in opposition, and under democratic and authoritarian regimes. This persistent quest fulfills Krasner's (1978: 35, 42–45) criteria for a national interest: constancy and autonomy. First, the continuous pursuit of this goal over a century shows that it is a national interest sustained by the state, not the specific aspiration of shifting government leaders. Second, this longstanding goal did not arise from the personal interests of state officials or from interest group pressure, such as business lobbies. For most of the 20th century, entrepreneurs had minimal influence on foreign policy. Moreover, the sectoral composition of business has shifted greatly; pressures from a changing private sector cannot account for the unchanging pursuit of the same goal. Therefore, a Liberal interpretation is not persuasive. Realism is more convincing: A self-perpetuating cadre of state actors, especially Brazil's insulated, professional diplomats, has led the definition and pursuit of this national interest.[4]

This close-knit group of state officials has long run foreign policy and guaranteed continuity (Amorim 2014: 154, 160–164, 169, 173, 176).

2 Showing longstanding continuity in its foreign policy, Brazil pursued this goal during the UN's foundation in the mid-1940s (Burges 2009: 21) and even in the League of Nations after the First World War (Smith 2010: 81, 86–87).

3 While Vigevani and Cepaluni (2009: 3, 7, 11, 31, 53, 63) highlighted the differences in the specific foreign-policy approaches that Brazil has pursued over time, they also acknowledge the fundamental continuity of the country's quest for greater "autonomy" and influence over the last few decades.

4 Even under democracy, its predominance and cohesion has only slowly started to erode (Cason and Power 2009; Saraiva 2010; Amorim 2014: 129–136).

Merit-based recruitment and first-rate training have bred a strong esprit de corps, which has cemented commitment to Brazil's national interest (Schneider 1976: 87–89, 96–97). These diplomats have advanced the permanent goals of the state, whether the government happened to be democratic or authoritarian or whether it hailed from the right or the left. As an "island of excellence" inside the Brazilian state, this diplomatic corps approximates the notion of "unitary rational actor" postulated by Realism (Hirst 2005: 2, 41; Amorim 2014: 173). Thus, the longstanding promotion of Brazil's great power aspirations has a clear institutional protagonist and bureaucratic carrier. Consciously pursued by a distinct group of actors, this Realist motivation is more easily observable and visible than in the US, for which Krasner (1978) designed his analytical strategy of inferring a national interest.

Brazil's quest for influence drives its foreign policy behavior as a "revealed preference." This self-interest causes the striking inconsistency of Brasília's adherence to international norms. The country eagerly put strong pressure on its weak neighbor Paraguay to safeguard democracy, but was reluctant to support US pressures for democracy in Peru in 2000 and Venezuela in 2014–2015; however, Brazil claimed to have defended democracy in Honduras in 2009, again in opposition to US efforts. These twists and turns are incoherent from a normative standpoint and therefore cast doubt on a Constructivist interpretation. However, these inconsistencies follow a Realist logic: Brazil pressures weak neighbors, yet resists what it sees as attempts to reinforce US hegemony in the Western hemisphere (Burges and Daudelin 2007: 115–129, especially 128–129; Hirst 2005: 45–47).

Some scholars have taken the absence of militarized power politics as proof that Brazilian foreign policy is an instrument for domestic development, as Liberalism would claim. In fact, Brazilian diplomats have downplayed or denied the quest for political power (Burges 2009: 1, 4–8, 12, 41–43, 46, 62). According to these views, Brazil's international strategy diverges categorically from earlier great powers, which rose via military strength; for instance, underdeveloped Brandenburg–Prussia gained influence through its armies. How different is contemporary Brazil, which spends strikingly little on defense and instead declares socioeconomic development as its overriding priority. The hunger for butter seems to have pushed aside any desire for guns.

However, this Liberal view confounds instruments with goals and overlooks the pragmatic, typically Realist adaptation to new realities, namely the opportunities and constraints of the contemporary international system. Because the global power constellation has changed pro-

foundly with US predominance and because Brazil's position diverges starkly from earlier rising powers, Realism itself predicts that the ways and means differ with whichthe country advances its foreign policy goals, compared to the tactics used by earlier great powers for their rise. These goals, however, which are the cornerstone of Brazil's foreign policy, embody the Realist quest for national power and international leadership, which all influential actors in the Brazilian state and society have shared (Schirm 2005: 113–114) and pursued with great consistency.

Most Brazilian policymakers have deliberately avoided announcing their quest for regional leadership because their South American neighbors are allergic to this ambition (Malamud 2011) and watch the lusophone giant with suspicion (Smith 2010: 2, 30, 86, 187). Brasília has feared a backlash, especially a ring of containment by the Spanish-speaking countries or defensive alliances with the US (cf. Walt 2005: 187–191). Official denials of Brazil's Realist ambitions (Burges 2009: 1, 4, 6, 8, 12, 41, 43, 46, 62) are a deliberate tactic to diminish obstacles to these Realist ambitions.

Downplaying military aspects of power and concentrating on its economic bases actually furthers Brazil's quest for influence, especially vis-à-vis Argentina, the one neighbor that historically competed with Brazil for regional leadership. For decades, Brazil avoided an arms race with Buenos Aires. But from the 1970s onward, both countries' development of nuclear energy threatened to unleash a dangerous form of competition. Strong pressure from the US eventually precluded any military usage. Interestingly, this concession to the hegemon actually benefited Brazil's regional quest for power. Whereas Argentina equals Brazil in terms of atomic capabilities, it is far inferior in terms of economic clout. Therefore, stopping nuclear competition and privileging economic relations favored Brazil's aspirations for South American leadership.

In general, socioeconomic development is not an alternative to national power, but a decisive precondition, particularly for a developing country. A poor, backward nation cannot boost its international influence. Therefore, the quests for power and development often coincide. But power has priority. This rank order became evident when Brazil helped to block the US's plan to establish a hemispheric free-trade zone. While the FTAA promised to stimulate trade, investment, and growth in line with Liberalism, Brazil forewent absolute economic gains for fear of cementing its subordination to the US and incurring a permanent loss in relative power. This conflict revealed Brazil's fundamental goal, namely the Realist quest for international influence.

To conclude, national power and global clout are the priorities that have driven Brazilian foreign policy for more than a century. Qualifying as "national interests" à la Realism, these aspirations have guided governments of all stripes.

Opening Space for Further Advance: Brazil's Role in International Institutions

In the Realist view advanced here, what is the position of rising middle powers vis-à-vis the established international institutions? How do foreign policymakers who see their country as predestined for regional leadership and international clout view the global order? The progress that these emerging nations have already achieved and the prospect of further advancement has discouraged a radical revamping of international institutions and has instead counseled pragmatic efforts to use existing opportunities and patiently enhance these openings. For a rising country like Brazil, playing by the existing rules has yielded substantial benefits; non-confrontational reforms can further boost these benefits. These perceptions, which reflect the recent past and realistically project it into the future, have prompted a bargaining strategy in which Brazil tenaciously tries to tilt the balance of costs and benefits in its favor and achieve greater influence in important international institutions. For this purpose, Brazil has sought alliances with other rising powers and doggedly engaged in negotiations with established nations.

For decades, Brazil has followed this pragmatic approach and rejected frontal attacks on the global order. This prudent pursuit of self-interest came to the fore in the 1970s, when a broad coalition of developing countries, inspired by OPEC's success in global wealth redistribution, demanded a transformation of international capitalism. A New International Economic Order (NIEO) should defend underdeveloped nations against the rapacity of multinational corporations, boost the prices of their commodity exports, and provide special advantages to the poorest countries. While Latin American countries such as Mexico (long before NAFTA) and Venezuela became leaders of this movement for profound global change, Brazil acted with caution. As a rising middle power, it was reluctant to disturb the global economy and had no interest in international leveling. Seeing itself as a future developed country, it displayed limited solidarity with its poorer, weaker brethren (Selcher 1978). Moreover, Brazilian policymakers did not want to scare away the multinational companies that propelled its impressive drive toward industrialization. Continued cooperation with the global Northwest was

decisive for making further advances with a development strategy that had produced a good deal of economic growth and technological progress.

Using the NIEO as a bargaining chip, Brazil preferred patient negotiations inside the institutional framework created by the First World, such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). In its result-oriented perspective, GATT could yield real benefits, in contrast to the rhetorical fireworks of the NIEO demands. Brazil pushed for trade concessions from the North and strategically invoked the Liberal principles of established institutions to combat rising protectionism, which hurt its increasingly competitive exports. This bargaining approach did not frontally challenge the international order, which had enabled Brazil to rise above the rest of the global South, but sought reforms to accelerate its own rise further (Selcher 1978; cf. Ikenberry 2011: 282, 341).

Brazil has continued to follow this self-interested approach. As an active participant in the World Trade Organization, it has persistently counteracted restrictions imposed by First World countries and opened up additional opportunities for its own industries and commodity exports (Hurrell 2005: 80–81; Vigevani and Cepaluni 2009: 69–73). In a thoroughly prepared effort, for instance, Brazil used WTO dispute settlement mechanisms to contest US cotton subsidies, achieving an emblematic victory (Shaffer et al. 2008; Hirst 2005: 29–32). Interestingly, while the outcome benefited Brazil, it hurt poorer cotton producers in Africa (Pelc 2014). In sum, rather than attacking international institutions as bastions of "hegemonic stability," Brasília has turned their mechanisms against their initial creators and beaten them with their own weapons. In this way, Brazil has promoted its narrow self-interests in a hard-nosed yet non-confrontational fashion (Cason and Power 2009: 129–130).

Typical of Realism, this pragmatic strategy relies on state power to garner benefits for Brazil and to protect and foster domestic development. It diverges from economic Liberalism by rejecting a free-market approach. Policymakers fear that unfettered global competition would overwhelm emerging industries, smother Brazil's ascent, and cement First World predominance. Just as Brazil kept its distance from the socialist-inspired NIEO proposal, it remained wary of the free-trade principles pushed by the US. When Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush promoted a Free Trade Area of the Americas, Brazil persistently dragged its feet (Hirst 2005: 32–38, 46; Hurrell 2005: 82–83, 104–105; Teixeira 2011). Too diplomatic to antagonize the Western hegemon with

a clear "No" – as Hugo Chávez delighted in doing – Brazil did not want to open its economy and remain defenseless against the powerful economic forces of the North (Daudelin and Burges 2011: 36–41). This passive resistance was meant to maintain political independence and safeguard the longstanding great power ambitions (Schirm 2005: 119–121). Brazil was determined not to become an appendage of the US in the same way as it felt Mexico had done through NAFTA (cf. Hakim 2002). Thus, Brazil's opposition to the FTAA corroborates a Realist interpretation over the Liberal alternative.

The Realist quest for power has also induced Brazil to go beyond efforts to modify international institutions for the sake of economic benefits. Brazil has increasingly pushed for more political influence, such as greater voting rights in the International Monetary Fund and a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (Schirm 2005: 113–117; Soares de Lima 2010: 8–15). However, in pursuing its political self-interest, Brazil has not advocated reforms inspired by the "democratic" principle of one country one vote, which would greatly dilute its influence in the sea of the global South. Instead, it has pushed for changes that reflect its growing economic clout and political influence and thereby privilege Brazil as a leader of the developing countries. Driven by its Realist national interest, Brasília does not seek global equality, but its own climb in the pecking order of global inequality (Schirm 2005: 113, 117, 125–126). Brazil is eager to join the select club of great powers; it does not want to overcome power as the organizing principle of the global order and replace it with international law, which – based on the maxim of state sovereignty – would mandate equal treatment for all nations (as in the UN General Assembly). Once again, Realism is more persuasive than Constructivism.

In sum, Brazil's strategy in international institutions reflects its overriding quest for national power and international influence, which has also prompted the instrumental pursuit of economic development. Political goals drive the long-term effort to reshape the global order gradually so that the country can rise even faster. Unwilling to jeopardize an institutional edifice that has allowed it to achieve considerable progress, Brazil avoids the extremes of economic Liberalism and "Socialist" Third Worldism. This rising power is demanding a seat at the First World table and shows limited concern for large parts of the global South, which are left outside the door. As Realism would expect, Brazil is determined to propel its own rise in the global power ranking.

Ambivalent Relationship with the Hegemonic Power

The challenges, opportunities, and constraints that a rising middle power faces come to a head in its dealings with the established leaders of the global system. These dilemmas are especially acute when the international power constellation approaches unipolarity, as occurred after the end of the Cold War. The fact that this middle power also lies in the sphere of influence claimed by the one remaining superpower further exacerbates these conflicting imperatives. Contemporary Brazil faces precisely this complicated situation, which is alleviated by the fact that it does not border the US, unlike Mexico.

Another twist that Brazil faces is the fact that foreign policy elites have traditionally seen the US as the main model to imitate. The economic prosperity, political clout, and military prowess of the North American powerhouse have long attracted global respect. Brazilian policy-makers have perceived – or projected – specific parallels. In the 19th century, the US claimed a "manifest destiny" to extend its territory and become the undisputed hegemon of North America. In a similar (but more constrained) way, Brazil rounded off its territory in the early 20th century and has long believed it is predestined to become the leading power in South America. Consequently, its Realist quest for growing clout seeks to replicate the US trajectory. Inspired by the frontrunner's success, Brazil's foreign policymakers believe that their country can achieve a similar ascent, sooner or later. Typical of Realism, this conviction is grounded in objective facts, especially Brazil's enormous size and demographic weight. South America's map corroborates the validity of Brazil's national aspirations – as the US inferred its manifest destiny from North America's map.

Of course, the parallels end when considering the reach of American predominance. Beyond turning the circum-Caribbean into its "backyard," the Northern superpower has also exerted strong influence in South America. Washington has pursued this goal via innumerable unilateral initiatives, exemplified by severe pressures on the Allende government in Chile (1970–1973) and comprehensive support for the Uribe administration in Colombia (2002–2010). Moreover, the Northern hegemon has institutionalized its influence through multilateral fora, especially the Organization of American States.

Consequently, the US is both Brazil's traditional role model and its primary rival (Hurrell 2005: 98–100). Driven by the Realist quest for relative clout, Brazil's rise would come at the expense of US influence. Accordingly, even the anti-Communist dictators of the 1970s, despite being ideologically aligned with the US, soon charted a surprisingly au-

tonomous course and opportunistically disregarded US interests. For instance, in order to boost Brazilian influence through close links to its "neighbors across the sea," the newly independent lusophone brethren of Angola and Mozambique, Brazil's conservative military regime recognized Marxist "liberation" movements that fought fierce civil wars against groupings supported by the US. Furthermore, in order to promote its nascent arms industry, Brazil pragmatically sold weapons to various Arab countries, including US enemies and notorious rogue regimes, such as Libya under Gaddafi (Zirker 1994: 125–126). To boost its own power interests, Brazil has not hesitated to act at cross-purposes with the US – non-confrontational in style, but firm in purpose.

Bolstered by its gradual rise, Brazil has also come to diverge from the Northern hegemon inside the Western hemisphere. In the 1980s already, Brazil supported the Contadora Group's attempts to seek a negotiated settlement of the Central American conflicts that deeply involved the US, although it cautiously avoided a central role in this faraway effort. After the debt crisis and subsequent market reforms counseled greater deference to the US for several years (Vigevani and Cepaluni 2009: ch. 2–3), Brazil in the new millennium charted an increasingly independent course. For instance, the country bailed out George W. Bush's nemesis Chávez during a severe oil strike in early 2003, and in 2009 opposed the opening of new US military bases in Colombia to prevent the global superpower from gaining a firmer foothold in Brazil's emerging sphere of influence, South America.

For the first time, the Northern hegemon faces a rising rival inside its own hemisphere. While Brazil has always operated pragmatically, pursued concrete national interests, and avoided open defiance, disagreements have slowly extended from specific economic issues to broader political questions. For instance, as the bailout of Chávez and the accommodating response to Bolivia's ostentatious "nationalization" of voluminous Petrobras holdings in 2006 (Cason and Power 2009: 133–134; Malamud 2011: 13–14) suggest, Brazil has courted left-wing neighbors that chart a nationalist course and stoke hostility to the US. While Brazilian diplomats abhor such noisy tactics and tried to contain Chávez's protagonism (*El País* 2006), ideological division in the Western hemisphere has enhanced Brazil's clout as reasonable "moderating power." Moreover, Chávez's mismanagement of Venezuela's oil boom enabled Brazil to supply billions of dollars' worth of products and services (Vigevani and Cepaluni 2009: 121–127). Thus, leftwing regimes that the US opposes have opened up political and economic opportunities for

Brazil, which the country uses for furthering its advance, rather than deferentially siding with the US.

Yet, while Brazil has pursued its self-interests even at the risk of displeasing the regional hegemon, it has always avoided confrontation. Overwhelming US power has ruled out open antagonism, not to speak of direct military competition (Hurrell 2005: 100). Whereas Brandenburg–Prussia boosted its armed strength inside the Holy Roman Empire and soon after confronted the Habsburg Emperors in war, Brazil has cautiously refrained from frontally challenging US "hierarchy" in the Western hemisphere. Instead, the lusophone aspirant has only sought "soft balancing against the United States" (Pape 2005), first through economic integration with its Southern Cone neighbors (MERCOSUL) and more recently through a political cooperation mechanism in South America (UNASUR; both are examined below) and through extra-regional outreach via the BRICS group.

The main reason is that to continue and accelerate its rise, Brazil needs economic cooperation with advanced industrialized countries, particularly the United States. The Northern rival commands tremendous economic clout through its control over capital and modern technology. Ambitious newcomers need these resources, especially when global unipolarity rules out military might and turns economic development into the main arena of competition for international power. Ironically, given its long-term goal of rivaling the US, Brazil currently needs economic collaboration with the US. Current partnership is meant to prepare the country for future competition for predominance. Brazil intends to turn mutual absolute benefit, the crucial promise of economic cooperation according to Liberalism, in an asymmetrical direction to enhance its relative clout in line with Realism. By pursuing this nested strategy, the country hopes to use its future rival to boost its current advance.

While Brazil's long-term perspective foresees a zero-sum game with the US for relative influence, its present weakness compels the country to play a positive-sum game with the Northern powerhouse to achieve economic gain and national development. American investments are important for upgrading Brazil's industrial and agro-export capacity and for fueling its technological advancement. The enormous US market is a prized target for exports. Moreover, US universities have trained thousands of Brazilians in science and engineering. While Brazil maintains intense economic relations with numerous countries and enjoys a diversified profile of international trade and investment, the US remains vital for its future development, a precondition for increasing national power.

The enormous size of the United States economy makes cooperation especially important for Brazil. Therefore, the Southern aspirant is currently quite dependent on the Northern hegemon.

For now, these strong economic ties limit the pursuit of Brazil's divergent political interests and rule out any open rivalry. In order to avoid jeopardizing its further advance, Brazil cannot afford to antagonize the US. For years to come, Brazil needs economic cooperation with the country that it eventually wants to equal, if not overtake in national power. This instrumental collaboration rests on the hope that these economic exchanges will yield disproportionate benefits for Brazil. Policymakers trust in their country's economic dynamism, which often produces higher growth rates than in the US. In this view, cooperation with the US yields relative benefits for Brazil and allows the ambitious Southern giant to gradually catch up to its Northern role model (as Japan did to the U.S. in earlier decades). Thus, the economic exchanges promoted by Liberalism are designed to serve the power goals highlighted by Realism.

The current need for economic cooperation with the US restricts how Brazil can advance its political interests and rules out any military pressure. So how can Brazil extend its influence and establish regional leadership in South America, a crucial step toward growing international influence? Brasília perceives the US, with its global political–military responsibilities and the gradual erosion of its economic predominance, as leaving a power vacuum in the subcontinent that the regional aspirant can cautiously fill. With US interests focused elsewhere, such as the Middle East and China, the global superpower may not (sufficiently) mind that its emerging intra-hemispheric rival is slowly turning into the guarantor of political order in its own neighborhood. The next section examines how Brasília has envisioned this effort.

Seeking Regional Leadership

To bolster its rise, Brazil has pursued the typical Realist goal of constructing its own sphere of influence. However, the constraints it faces as a latecomer have meant that this project also de-emphasizes military power and primarily uses economic cooperation, which – given the difference in national clout – is bound to tie its neighbors into asymmetrical dependencies (Daudelin and Burges 2011: 46). Thus, like its dealings with the global hegemon, Brazil's relations with countries lower in the international pecking order have a Realist core and seek relative political gain and power, but employ non-confrontational, collaborative means. They invoke the Liberal promise of mutual benefit for the Realist end of promoting Brazilian power. Accordingly, Brasília seeks to establish a

"cooperative hegemony" (Pedersen 2002; Burges 2008; Teixeira 2011: 201–207).

For many years, Brazil's geographic distance to its neighbors across the impenetrable Amazon meant that the goal of fortifying its perimeter had much lower priority than was the case for earlier great powers, such as France in the 17th to 19th centuries. As Argentina was Brazil's only serious rival, foreign policy-makers adopted the typical safeguard advocated by European *Realpolitik* in creating a buffer state, Uruguay (Smith 2010: 16–17). However, since the defeat of Paraguay's adventurous expansionism in a brutal war (1864–1870), armed force has played a subordinate role in Brazil's relations in South America. For the country's long-term goal, it would be counter-productive to push its military weight around. Confrontational moves would induce its neighbors to form a defensive alliance against Brazil or seek US protection. Given the current distribution of international power, prudence demands that Brazil forgo military means.

Brasília has been especially careful to avoid stirring up its old rivalry with Argentina, which remains averse to recognizing its predominance.[5] The lusophone giant wants to avert a counter-balancing coalition that could include Peru and Venezuela and thereby create a wall of containment. In the mid-1970s, anti-Communist dictators ruled Brazil while Argentina and Venezuela enjoyed democracy and Peru was under a "progressive" military regime; during this time, Brazilian policy-makers feared such "encirclement" (*cerco*). In recent years, the close ties between Venezuela's Chávez and the Kirchner governments in Argentina also ran counter to Brazilian ambitions, especially because Venezuela's populist president claimed regional leadership and used billions of petrodollars to buy diplomatic support in Buenos Aires (Gómez Mera 2014: 189–190, 216). In response, Brazil forged close economic links to Venezuela, trying to contain Chávez and limit his ambitions (*El País* 2006), while mollifying Argentina through disproportionate trade concessions.

Facing suspicious neighbors (Malamud 2011) and the hegemonic US, Brazil's effort to expand its regional influence has deliberately avoided any forceful pressures and has used the lure of economic benefits. Foreign policy-makers have promoted economic cooperation, assuming that their country's disproportionate weight will inevitably make any collaboration asymmetrical. The partner's growing dependence on Brazil will then cement the leadership of this rising middle power. Interestingly,

5 For instance, Argentina strongly opposed Brazil's demand for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (Schirm 2005: 117; Malamud 2011: 9–11).

Brazil is applying the same mechanism as in its relations with the US, but hopes that the development and size gradient will work in opposite directions, benefiting Brazil both vis-à-vis the stronger and more advanced United States and its weaker neighbors. Accordingly, Brazil applies in South America similar tactics to the use of economic cooperation for purposes of political power and regional hegemony that Albert Hirschman (1945) analyzed in his seminal study of the international political economy of Realism.

For this purpose, Brazil has established closer economic ties to its neighbors, especially through massive investments in Bolivia's natural gas industry and the enormous hydroelectric dam at Itaipu with Paraguay (Zirker 1994: 122–124). Since the 1990s, Brazil has also promoted infrastructural integration in South America to facilitate greater trade (Burges 2009: 25–26, 30, 101, 113–123, 185). Peru has been a special target for Brazilian road-building efforts. While the resource constraints of a developing country have limited these initiatives, they have also slowly tied its neighbors into an ever denser web of linkages (Burges 2008: 78).

Crucially for Brazil's Realist strategy, these cooperative ventures are inherently asymmetrical: They make neighbors dependent on the lusophone giant and allocate the fruits of cooperation unequally (Burges 2009: 60–61, 94–123). When nationalistic governments in Bolivia and Paraguay demanded redress in recent years, Brazil avoided confrontation and made economic concessions to preserve relationships with long-term political payoffs. Accordingly, after Bolivia ostentatiously nationalized large holdings of the national oil company Petrobras, the Lula administration sought reconciliation to keep Bolivia firmly tied into the Brazilian orbit (*La Razón* 2007; Cason and Power 2009: 133–134; Malamud 2011: 12–14).

Brazil has also pursued politically motivated cooperation through multilateral initiatives, especially the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUL). By boosting trade and investment among Southern Cone countries in the 1990s, this integration scheme furthered Brazil's goal of using economic exchanges to gain political influence. Even after economic crises undid these concrete payoffs, Brazil kept promoting this trade pact as a major foreign policy initiative in South America (Cason and Power 2009: 133). This priority, emphasized against severe economic odds and at the cost of accommodating Argentina's special demands, reveals the political rationale driving Brazil's relations to its neighbors. Brazil has seen MERCOSUL as a sub-regional alliance that strengthens its political hand and bargaining position vis-à-vis the US (Gómez Mera 2014: 7, 25–26, 55, 73–74, 145–148, 156, 184–185, 208–209). Through

this coalition with its Southern Cone neighbors, Brazil engages in "soft balancing against the United States" (Pape 2005). When the emerging power had to engage the United States' push for a hemispheric free trade zone, MERCOSUL played a crucial role for sustaining Brazil's defensive posture and passive resistance (Teixeira 2011).

With its growing international clout, Brazil has recently expanded this regional multilateralism via the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). Seeing the sub-continent as its own sphere of influence, Brasília has promoted political cooperation, especially to address crises among its neighbors, such as the fierce regional conflicts in Bolivia in 2008 and the protest wave in Venezuela in 2014. By cautiously leading efforts to resolve these issues from inside the region, Brazil has sought to forestall US involvement, whether it proceeds unilaterally or via the Organization of American States (Hirst 2005: 45–47; Spektor 2010: 202–203; Daudelin and Burges 2011: 50–58). Through UNASUR, Brazil is starting to establish its political leadership in South America (Saraiva 2010: 160–161; Trinkunas 2014: 16–19) and to strengthen its soft balancing against the US.

In sum, Brazil's relations with its neighbors have been similar to its dealings with the US – and equally instrumental. Driven by the Realist goal of enhancing its national power and international clout, but facing an entrenched hegemon, Brazil has realistically foregone typically Realist means and has instead relied on economic cooperation.[6] The underlying hope is that mutual gain will result in disproportionate benefit for Brazil and thus increase the country's relative clout, steadily eroding the US's advantage while establishing its own leadership in South America and beyond. Thus, Brazil has tried to use a positive-sum game in the economic sphere in order to advance in an overarching zero-sum game over international influence. By downplaying the quest for power at the moment, Brazil intends to lay the ground for a successful bid for power later on.

Conclusion

Recent years have seen a lively discussion about "the end of International Relations theory" (Dunne, Hansen, and Wight 2013). Leading scholars have supported (Lake 2013) or bemoaned (Mearsheimer and Walt 2013)

6 In line with Realism, now that Brazil is gaining international influence, there have been calls for the increased acquisition and usage of hard, military power (Bertonha 2010).

the fact that the field has left behind debates over paradigms and has moved to the pragmatic construction of eclectic explanations and the empirical testing of specific hypotheses. However, paradigmatic thinking has great value in that it clarifies and systematizes analysis. Eclecticism can become muddled; the reliance on a variety of factors can discourage hard thinking. Mere hypothesis testing can yield countless narrow findings that fail to add up to an interesting big picture.

To advance theory development, I have sought to demonstrate that Brazilian foreign policy has followed a coherent Realist strategy designed to turn this huge nation into a regional great power and influential global player. While these goals have left room for significant shifts in foreign policy tactics (Vigevani and Cepaluni 2009), they have consistently guided a diverse range of governments, both right-wing and left-wing, authoritarian and democratic. As Realism argues, there has been striking continuity in Brazil's international approach, driven by the quest for regional power and global clout.

For Brazil as a latecomer, however, the existing constellation of international power, especially the predominance of the United States, has necessitated tactics for advancing its Realist ambitions that differ clearly from those of earlier great powers. Brazil must forgo typical means highlighted by Realists, especially military might, in order to avoid prompting an overwhelming reaction from the US and triggering a defensive alliance among its neighbors, which would thwart Brazil's ambitions. Instead of applying the confrontational approach with which traditional great powers propelled their rise (cf. Gilpin 1981), Brazil must rely on cooperation, assuming that the resulting absolute benefits will yield relative gains for itself. Accordingly, by collaborating with the US, Brazil hopes that its dynamic economy will achieve higher growth rates than the satiated, sectorally declining colossus of the North. In its joint ventures with its smaller, weaker neighbors, Brazil hopes to establish dependencies that tie these countries into its own sphere of influence. Thus, while using the promise of mutual benefit to promote cooperation, Brazil is pursuing ulterior motives focused on the asymmetrical accumulation of power. By examining the main arenas of Brazilian foreign policy, this essay has traced the tightrope that Realist foreign policymakers must cross while being constrained by an established hegemon.

The impact of these constraints becomes obvious in a comparison with China, which has followed a similar approach to Brazil by seeking increasing international power at the same time as needing economic cooperation with its future rival – the United States (Deng 2008: 2–3, 16–17, 21, 121–123, 167–168; Feng 2008: 39–44, 50–53; Goldstein 2008:

61–63). The Middle Kingdom, however, faces fewer limitations than Brazil because it lies outside the US's regional sphere of influence. Moreover, China acquired nuclear arms early and thus gained admission to the cartel of global great powers, as certified by its permanent seat on the UN Security Council (Brazil's longstanding yet elusive goal). For these reasons, China commands greater room to maneuver than the lusophone aspirant.

As my Realist interpretation expects, China has relied more on traditional means for increasing its power, especially military might. This propensity was especially high when the country was isolated from the international community, as the 1979 war with Vietnam showed. However, even after opening up to the global economy and establishing ample cooperation with Western countries, China has "pushed its weight around" more aggressively than Brazil (Tan 2012), as its sabre rattling in the South China Sea demonstrates (Johnston 2013: 17, 19, 31, 45). Interestingly, this more traditionally Realist behavior prevails only in China's own sphere of influence. In its ever-growing incursions into Latin America, the backyard claimed by the US, the Asian power has deliberately avoided military initiatives. By concentrating with calculated pragmatism on economic cooperation, China has acted in Latin America just like Brazil. Thus, it has flexibly adjusted its tactics to regional power constellations (Deng 2008: 22, 55, 245–247), as Realism expects. The dissimilarities to China's approach in different regional theaters (cf. Ikenberry 2011: 26–27, 82, 90–91, 283) and in an overarching comparison to Brazil corroborate the crucial impact of the international power distribution, the master variable of Realism. The norms and values highlighted by Constructivism, which should command more uniform behavior across the world, are much less important.[7]

As this comparison suggests, the extension of Realism discussed in this essay elucidates not only the foreign policy of Brazil, but of other emerging powers as well (see also Layne 2012). The essay also demonstrates the broader applicability of Realism, which can shed light on rising countries as well, and not only on traditional great powers. Because power pervades the international system (see Finnemore and Goldstein 2013), it shapes the opportunities and constraints facing these nations and substantially influences their foreign policy strategies. Last

7 "English School" thinkers such as Buzan (2004: 208–213) argue that norms and values come in regional clusters of different "thickness" (see also Hurrell 2007: ch. 10). But international power constellations seem to underlie and drive this clustering, as the US's especially intense efforts at promoting liberal values in Latin America suggest.

not least, by applying this Realist line of reasoning to a prominent aspirant and developing a coherent analysis of its foreign policies over more than a century, the present essay has sought to show the value of paradigmatic thinking. Theory remains crucial for the field of International Relations.

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Realismo sob Hegemonia: uma abordagem teórica acerca da ascensão internacional do Brasil

Resumo: Como o campo de Teoria das Relações Internacionais pode contribuir para o entendimento acerca de processos através dos quais países em desenvolvimento, como o Brasil, atingem uma posição de liderança regional e significativa influência internacional? A análise que se segue propõe que a perspectiva Realista explica a estratégia internacional

da Politica Externa Brasileira durante as últimas décadas de maneira mais clara e convincente quando comparada às abordagens Liberal-institucionalista e Construtivista. A despeito das mudanças de governo e regimes políticos, a PEB vem se caracterizando pela busca persistente de vantagens políticas relativas, especialmente no que tange à ascendência internacional do país. Entretanto, a presença de um poder hegemônico no continente, os Estados Unidos, desafia a capacidade brasileira de utilizar os instrumentos e as táticas convencionais do Realismo (confronto político-militar), motivando a preferência pela cooperação econômica nas suas relações tanto com tal poder hegemônico, quanto com os vizinhos mais frágeis. Portanto, é através da cooperação como estratégia de inserção internacional que o Brasil busca obter vantagens comparativas, contribuindo para o aumento de seu poder relativo. Por meio da elucidação destes cálculos complexos, o artigo apresenta como a abordagem Realista explica as possibilidades, limites e preferências de nações ambiciosas como o Brasil para perseguir os seus interesses em Politica Externa. Ao mesmo tempo, o artigo contribui para a elaboração de uma versão da teoria Realista que apreende as recentes dinâmicas de poder no sistema internacional.

Palavras chave: Brasil, Politica Externa, Teoria de Relações Internacionais